

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, August 2, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-13
Juvenile Justice	14-17
Employment	18-19
Health Care	20
Vulnerable Adults	21-22

*Important story at this spot



Rose's case is query focus Child protection panel to meet here

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 02, 2006

By Ron Fonger

rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

FLINT - A special state House

committee reviewing how Michigan handles child abuse cases is coming here Thursday to hear more about the death of 5-year-old Rose Kelley of Flint.

The state Special Committee on Child Protection has scheduled a 1 p.m. hearing to take testimony from Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton and others.

"We have an obligation when a situation arises that illustrates a weakness or flaw (in the system) to correct them," said state Rep. David B. Robertson, R-Grand Blanc Twp.

Robertson said he was asked to arrange Thursday's hearing after committee members heard of Rose's case.

Rose was found dead in a lice-infested, trash-strewn home in June.

The state Department of Human Services had ordered her parents, Michelle L. Bowen and Jeffery C. Kelley, to take parenting classes in 2004 and receive "prevention services" in 2005 after allegations that another child had been medically neglected. The children had remained with the couple, however.

It's been unclear what contact or

follow-up caseworkers had with the family since then, and DHS officials have refused to discuss specifics of the case.

DHS Director Marianne Udow has called Rose's death "a nightmare for everybody who cares about children" and committed last month to sharing the results of two pending investigations into how DHS handled the case - one an internal probe and another by the Office of Children's Ombudsman.

Leyton said he will talk about Rose's case but said he still needs more information before he can make conclusions about how DHS did its job.

DHS spokeswoman Mauren

Sorbet said the department will have representatives at the hearing,

though officials haven't been asked to attend.

Sorbet would not comment on the work of the committee, which already has had meetings elsewhere and includes state Reps. David Law, R-Commerce Twp., and Bill McConico, D-Detroit.

©2006 Flint Journal

© 2006 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Man Convicted In Fire That Killed 5 Children

Authorities Say 2000 Fire Set Over Money Dispute

POSTED: 3:05 pm EDT August 1, 2006

PONTIAC, Mich. -- A man accused of setting a house fire that killed five children has been convicted of five counts of first-degree murder and an arson count.

An Oakland County jury deliberated for less than five hours over two days before returning its verdict Tuesday against Juwan Deering, 35, of the county's Royal Oak Township.

The fire on April 6, 2000, killed five of nine children who were inside the home. The victims were Talleigha Dean, 10; Craig Dean, 8; Aaron Dean, 7; Eugene Dean, 5; and the siblings' 11-year-old cousin, Michelle Frame.

Marie Dean, mother of the four Dean children, put her face in her hands and sobbed as the verdict was read. Paul Frame, Michelle's father, hugged Dean and cried.

Deering shrugged and shook his head.

Authorities had said he set the fire because of a dispute over money with a man who formerly was in a relationship with Dean.

Defense attorney Arnold Weiner had argued that his client was innocent, saying there were no witnesses or material evidence.

Deering will be sentenced Aug. 23. He will receive a mandatory prison sentence of life with no possibility of parole when he returns before Chief Judge Wendy Potts of Oakland County Circuit Court.

Previous Stories:

- July 20, 2006: [Trial Under Way For Man Accused Of Fatal Family Fire](#)
- April 11, 2006: [Man Accused Of Setting Fire That Killed Five Children](#)

Copyright 2006 by [The Associated Press](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

RELATED TO STORY

[+ Enlarge](#)



THE OAKLAND PRESS

LOCAL NEWS

Partly Cloudy, 93°
5 day forecast

Subscribe



SITE MENU... ▼

[Home](#) > [Local News](#) > Guilty of murder

Wednesday, August 2, 2006

 [E-mail](#)  [Print](#)

Guilty of murder

Web-posted Aug 2, 2006

Parents of five children console each other as verdict is read**By STEPHEN FRYE**
Of The Oakland Press

Juwan Deering was not smiling after a jury convicted him Tuesday of five counts of first-degree felony murder in an arson fire that killed five children.

Even without an eyewitness or any physical evidence tying him to the fire, the jury needed only 4 1/2 hours to convict Deering as charged.

The 35-year-old admitted crack cocaine dealer will be sentenced to life in prison without parole Aug. 23 by Oakland County Chief Circuit Judge Wendy Potts.

Throughout the trial, Deering often smiled confidently as he sat beside defense attorney Arnold Weiner.

With the one word from the jury forewoman, "Guilty," Deering stared straight ahead and showed no emotion as he held his hands forward on the arms of his chair.



Paul Frame, father of one of the victims who died in an April 2000 fire, and Marie Dean, mother of four other children who died, fight back emotions as the verdict for Juwan Deering is read in Oakland County Circuit Court. Deering faces life in prison after being convicted of setting fire to the home where the five children lived. Paul

But with that one word, the mother of four victims and the father of the fifth cried and hugged as deep emotions poured forward.

Frame and his daughter rented a room from the Dean family. -The Oakland Press/DOUG BAUMAN

The fire shocked Oakland County when it occurred, late on April 6, 2000, at a now-demolished home at Pasadena and Mitchelldale streets in Royal Oak Township.

And though Deering was a suspect within two weeks, it took detectives six years to get him charged.

Marie Dean - the mother of victims TaLeigha, 10; Craig, 8; Aaron, 7; and Eugene, 6 - said the pain of the loss still hurts and that this conviction is not a win.

"They are never coming back," she said. "It's been a hard six years, and it'll be a hard lifetime."

For Paul Frame, the father of 11-year-old Michelle, who perished inside the room they rented from the Deans, the verdict means his daughter's death is vindicated.

"I'm glad he's in jail," Frame said. "He deserves to be where he's at."

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Gregory Townsend said the children died because Deering wanted to send a message about a minor crack cocaine debt owed by the Deans' father, which was either \$50 or \$200, depending on various accounts offered in testimony.

Frame, who has been inspired to study criminal justice by this case, said he had to hear everything. At times, he clenched his fists; other times, he wept.

"I knew Michelle wanted me to hold it together," he said. "I had to give the criminal justice their chance, and they didn't let me down. I wanted to sit through all of it, because I needed it as part of my closure."

Frame now wants to focus on raising his 1-year-old daughter, and he plans to finish his bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

He vigorously hugged the three men who brought this case to trial: Townsend and lead detectives from the Oakland County Sheriff's Special Investigation Unit, Sgts. Gary Miller and David Wurtz.

Weiner said Deering simply offered too many inconsistencies to detectives, changing his alibis numerous times.

"Oakland County juries are very, very conservative," a drained Weiner said.

With the police exhausting every lead over six years, Weiner said the jury likely believed them when they said everything pointed to Deering.

The biggest piece of evidence to challenge for Weiner was the testimony of Deering's friend, who testified Deering said the fire would be blamed on Deering - when he was seven blocks from the scene and fire could not yet be seen.

"The jury probably wondered, 'Why would his own friend say something like that if it wasn't true?' " Weiner said.

The conviction is a victory for Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca, who said this case should have been charged years ago. When charging Deering in March, he blamed his former head of warrants, James Halushka, who left the office earlier this year, for failing to issue charges.

Halushka had felt more evidence needed to be collected.

But Gorcyca said the case had to be tried before too much time had passed.

The only real evidence tying Deering to the fire came from the friend's statements and testimony from three cellmates recounting admissions made in lock-up.

But Townsend said that is how arson cases go, and even with a challenging case, all he wants is for the jury to consider the evidence.

"It's like any arson case," Townsend said. "You never have an eyewitness in an arson case. In an arson fire, you are not going to get any DNA or hair or anything else - unless you're a show called CSI. " He said the most important thing was getting justice for the families. "I've got five kids who can now rest in peace," Townsend said.

 [E-mail](#)  [Print](#)



[Feedback](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Place A Classified Ad](#) | Copyright © 2006 The Oakland Press, All Rights Reserved |

[Return to regular web page](#)



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

August 2, 2006

Man guilty in fire deaths of kids

Royal Oak Township resident to get life term Aug. 23 for setting house ablaze over drug debt.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- An Oakland Circuit Court jury convicted a Royal Oak Township man Tuesday in the April 2000 deaths of five children in a house fire investigators said was deliberately set because of an unpaid drug debt.

The mother of four of the children and the father of another young victim sobbed as the verdicts, and their children's names, were read aloud in Oakland Circuit Judge Wendy Potts' courtroom.

Juwan Deering, 35, sat silently as the verdicts -- five counts of first-degree felony murder and arson -- were read. Deering's defense attorney, Arnold Weiner, gently patted his client's right shoulder.

Killed in the Royal Oak Township house fire were Talleigha Dean, 10; Craig Dean, 8; Aaron Dean, 7; Eugene Dean, 5; and their 11-year-old cousin, Michelle Frame.

After the verdict was read, Marie Dean -- mother of the four Dean children -- and other relatives hugged and shook the hands of assistant Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Gregory Townsend and Oakland County Sheriff's detectives Gary Miller and David Wurtz, who worked the case for nearly six years.

"I don't know what I feel right now," a weeping Marie Dean said outside the courtroom. "It still hurts, the fact that some person did it and caused this loss of life.

"It's not a victory," she said. "They aren't ever coming back. It's been a hard six years and it's going to be a hard life time."

Michelle Frame's father, Paul Frame, said he was "just glad it's over and (Deering) is in jail and my daughter is vindicated."

Townsend convinced the jury of six men and six women that Deering set the fire at 8038 Pasadena to "send a message" to one of his customers, Oliver "Big Mike" Dean, father of four of the children. Dean, the prosecution said, owed Deering money for drugs.

Dean was in a hospital when the fire killed his children.

Marie Dean escaped the burning building with two other children, Aireus Dean, 3, and Autumn Dean, 2.

Defense attorney Weiner argued unsuccessfully for Deering's acquittal, saying there was no material evidence linking him to the fire, and that testimony against Deering came largely from police informants placed in his cell. Weiner maintained his client was innocent and not even in the township when the fire occurred.

Deering will face mandatory life in prison when sentenced Aug. 23.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

[Return to regular web page](#)



Man pleads guilty to child porn charges

THETFORD TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 02, 2006

By Kim Crawford

kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

A Thetford Township man indicted by a federal grand jury earlier this year has pleaded guilty to charges of production, distribution and possession of child pornography.

Alan E. Sain, 28, entered the guilty plea Tuesday before Judge Nancy Edmunds in U.S. District Court in Detroit. He faces sentencing by Edmunds on Nov. 7.

The most serious charge against Sain is that he enticed, coerced and used a child to engage in sexually explicit conduct and produced pictures of the acts, a charge punishable by a minimum of 15 years in prison.

Sain was first charged in a complaint by a Detroit-based FBI agent with e-mailing pictures of child pornography from a computer in the basement of a relative's home in March.

Shortly after that, he was indicted by the grand jury on additional charges of making and possessing child pornography. Sain had stood mute, and "not guilty" pleas had been entered for him, when he was arraigned on the charges late in March.

There was no discussion about why he changed his plea in court on Tuesday.

- Kim Crawford

©2006 Flint Journal

© 2006 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Livonia child psychologist pleads guilty in sex case

His sentencing is set for Sept. 27

BY ZLATI MEYER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 2, 2006

The Livonia child psychologist accused of setting up a sexual rendezvous near Atlanta with an 11-year-old girl whose mom he met on the Internet has pleaded guilty. The mom was an undercover agent. Charles Bruce Fraelich, 58, is scheduled for sentencing Sept. 27 in an Atlanta federal court. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. He was charged with one count of aggravated sexual abuse and one count of using the Internet to attempt to coerce and entice a minor to engage in illegal sexual activity. He entered his plea July 20.

His attorney Paul Kish would not comment on the case Tuesday.

Fraelich is currently in jail, according to Patrick Crosby, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia.

Fraelich's license to practice in Michigan has been revoked, T. J. Bucholz, spokesman for the state Department of Community Health, said Tuesday. Fraelich, an Ann Arbor resident, practiced in Livonia.

As early as Feb. 27, investigators said, Fraelich started communicating online with a person who he thought was the mother of a pre-teen girl. Investigators said Fraelich repeatedly described what he wanted to do with the child and, urging the mother to let him do so, arranged to meet the two at a Sandy Springs, Ga., restaurant on April 20, when he planned to drive from Gainesville, Fla., where he had been visiting relatives.

He was nabbed in the eatery's parking lot.

The mom actually was an undercover agent on the FBI's Safe Child Task Force in Georgia, and the daughter was fictitious.

The "guilty plea should serve as a disturbing reminder that sexual predators lurk on the Internet," said U.S. Attorney David Nahmias in a news release. "When even a

child psychologist attempts to prey on a young child, we must vigilantly protect the safety of our children."

Approximately 1 out of every 5 Internet users ages 10 to 17 have received an unwanted sexual solicitation in the past year, according to a recent U.S. Department of Justice survey.

Contact **ZLATI MEYER** at 248-351-3291 or meyer@freepress.com.

Copyright © 2006 Detroit Free Press Inc.



Girls testify friend's stepfather molested them

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 02, 2006

By Paul Janczewski

pjanczewski@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6313

A Fenton Township man charged

with sexually molesting two pre-teen neighbor girls was ordered to stand

trial.

Dale A. Drinkwine, 36, faces an arraignment Monday before Genesee Circuit Judge Richard B. Yuille.

He faces two counts each of first-degree criminal sexual conduct - which carries up to life in prison upon conviction - and second-degree CSC, a 15-year felony.

During a preliminary examination, Central District Judge Richard L. Hughes closed the courtroom while the two girls, ages 6 and 11, testified.

Police and prosecutors said the

girls went to Drinkwine's Fenton

Township mobile home April 14 to play with his stepdaughter, but she was not home.

He allegedly invited the girls inside, and they began playing with a Ouija board.

The older girl said she saw Drinkwine molest her sister by placing his hand down her pants as she sat on his lap. She said he then did the same thing to her.

The girls told their parents what happened when they returned home, and police were called.

Sgt. David Dwyre of the Genesee County Sheriff's Department said he spoke to Drinkwine, who was wearing a specially padded suit in court issued to suicidal inmates in jail.

Dwyre said Drinkwine admitted molesting both girls.

He said Drinkwine initially denied any involvement with the girls, but later cried and was remorseful and wrote a letter of apology to the girls.

Attorney Patricia A. Lazzio, who represents Drinkwine, argued against the first-degree CSC charges, saying

Drinkwine admitted brushing his hand against the girls' genitals.

But assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Janet McLaren said the law provides for that charge, and a jury should decide it.

Drinkwine, who was recently deemed competent for trial, was on probation at the time of his arrest.

He is being held on a high cash bond in the Genesee County Jail.

©2006 Flint Journal

© 2006 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Inkster mom sues county over her son's death in jail

Suicidal teen was murdered, she says

BY CECIL ANGEL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 2, 2006

The mother of a teen whose death in the Wayne County Jail in April was ruled a suicide has filed a lawsuit seeking a \$25-million judgment against the county, alleging that her 17-year-old son was a victim of neglect and murder.

Helen McClain of Inkster claims that her son, Maurice McClain, who was serving time for unarmed robbery, should have been placed in a juvenile facility and monitored because of suicidal tendencies.

She alleges that jail personnel knew her son "was having psychological and disruptive problems," and that any items he could have used to injure himself should have been removed from his cell.

According to police, Maurice McClain hung himself with a bed sheet. The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office ruled that he died by asphyxiation.

Helen McClain, her family members, lawyer Karri Mitchell and Ron Scott of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality disputed that Tuesday at a news conference in Detroit.

McClain said her son's death was the result of foul play.

"I know that my son did not commit suicide in the Wayne County Jail," she said. "My son was beat to death."

Mitchell said he saw the body at the Wayne County morgue and that there were no marks around Maurice McClain's neck suggesting that he hung himself.

The lawsuit alleges that Maurice McClain's death on April 29 was caused by Wayne County sheriff's deputies neglecting his state constitutional rights and amounted to premeditated murder.

"Maurice McClain was the victim of summary execution at the hands of the

defendants," the lawsuit says.

Helen McClain and Mitchell said the suit, which was filed July 26 in Wayne County Circuit Court in Detroit, was necessary because jail officials won't give them information about Maurice McClain's death.

"I asked for any evidence, any pictures -- anything that they can show me. I haven't been called back," McClain said.

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans said Tuesday that McClain had been told that her son's death was under investigation. He could not say when the investigation would be concluded because the Detroit Police Department had not finished its inquiry.

Detroit police are involved because the death occurred in the city.

"She suffered a tragedy, and I understand that," Evans said.

Evans said that an evaluation of Maurice McClain based on his age, the crime and his history indicated that he should have been in an adult facility.

According to Maurice McClain's juvenile records, he had been placed in at least three programs after he was found guilty in 2005 of helping two other men snatch a woman's purse. In each of the facilities, he got into trouble.

After he was charged with escaping from Star Commonwealth in Albion while he was on a home visit in Detroit, a judge chose to send him to adult jail rather than to a boot camp.

Contact **CECIL ANGEL** at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com. Staff writer Jack Kresnak contributed to this report.

Copyright © 2006 Detroit Free Press Inc.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home helps rebuild children's lives

Wednesday, August 2, 2006

By Brian Johnson and Dolly Roselip

From birth, children's brains develop as they learn from their environment and we all, as adults, are accountable for what we teach or fail to teach. We are also responsible for the decisions we make about what to do with those children who learn the lessons of crime and violence too well.

It's dismaying to live in a community in which there are children for whom a locked room is a better place for them to be than where they are. We lock them up because their homes, their neighborhoods, their community have taught them the behavior that helps them survive in their environment -- behavior that offends the rest of us.

Kalamazoo County's Juvenile Home was built in the 1930s to be an orphanage. The Great Depression was a time when we needed those institutions. As we developed more nurturing alternatives such as foster homes and group homes, the orphanage became a place for runaways and abandoned and unwanted children. It is now the place where we incarcerate children who cannot be controlled in the community. In 2006, delinquent youth need more than we can offer in a decaying and inappropriately configured building.

Some need residential mental health treatment to address their emotional and psychological problems. For them, there is nowhere in our county that can offer the right treatment in a secure enough environment and we send them away -- often to another state -- for rehabilitation that is enormously expensive and further alienates them from our community and the families that they will inevitably return to.

It's time we developed more successful ways to treat the children that we hold locally in our Juvenile Home and to keep with us the ones we now send away. These changes cannot happen in the current Juvenile Home and there is no cost-effective way to renovate the building at 1424 Gull Road that will make it a place that the youth who live there can receive the supportive and effective programs they need.

For more than 15 years there have been discussions in this community about replacing the Juvenile Home and now is the time to do it. The needs have been catalogued, the alternatives have been investigated and there will never be a time when it will be less expensive than it is right now.

Replacing the Juvenile Home is not being "soft on crime." Replacing the building is giving our well-trained and dedicated juvenile justice, mental health, education and social service professionals a running chance at helping children to be children -- and to grow up to be adults who can contribute to our community.

The funding that is asked for in a millage put before Kalamazoo County voters on Aug. 8 is only for a building. It is not for operations -- those expenses are already provided for elsewhere in the county's budget. Just a building -- a place where rehabilitation can begin; a space that is secure enough and flexible enough to produce change.

Better Tomorrows is a collaborative of representatives from public and private agencies, businesses and government with a focus on how to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors in our community that hinder or help youth to develop in a normal and healthy way. We urge our fellow Kalamazoo County citizens and voters to help us help these troubled children.

For more information about the proposed changes to the Juvenile Home, log on to:

www.kalcountycitizensforkids.com, or call the Juvenile Home at 383-8550

to arrange a tour.

Dolly Roselip and Brian Johnson are

co-chairs of Kalamazoo County Better

Tomorrows. This is also signed by Steering Committee members: Dale Anderson,

David Artley, Jeannie Byrne,

Kristi Carambula, Don Cooney,

the Rev. Don DeYoung, Paula Gilchrist,

Denise Hartsough, Karen Hayter,

Ron Kramer, Mandy Matthews,

Jacqueline E. Mitchell, Sue Muinch,

Don Nitz, Joe Schmitt, Danielle Sielatycki, David Sluyter, Charles Spence,

Richard Szwaja, Frank Weichlein,

the Rev. Milton Wells, Douglas Wood,

Tammy Woodhams and Thell Woods.

©2006 Kalamazoo

© 2006 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Inkster mom sues county over her son's death in jail

Suicidal teen was murdered, she says

BY CECIL ANGEL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 2, 2006

The mother of a teen whose death in the Wayne County Jail in April was ruled a suicide has filed a lawsuit seeking a \$25-million judgment against the county, alleging that her 17-year-old son was a victim of neglect and murder.

Helen McClain of Inkster claims that her son, Maurice McClain, who was serving time for unarmed robbery, should have been placed in a juvenile facility and monitored because of suicidal tendencies.

She alleges that jail personnel knew her son "was having psychological and disruptive problems," and that any items he could have used to injure himself should have been removed from his cell.

According to police, Maurice McClain hung himself with a bed sheet. The Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office ruled that he died by asphyxiation.

Helen McClain, her family members, lawyer Karri Mitchell and Ron Scott of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality disputed that Tuesday at a news conference in Detroit.

McClain said her son's death was the result of foul play.

"I know that my son did not commit suicide in the Wayne County Jail," she said. "My son was beat to death."

Mitchell said he saw the body at the Wayne County morgue and that there were no marks around Maurice McClain's neck suggesting that he hung himself.

The lawsuit alleges that Maurice McClain's death on April 29 was caused by Wayne County sheriff's deputies neglecting his state constitutional rights and amounted to premeditated murder.

"Maurice McClain was the victim of summary execution at the hands of the

defendants," the lawsuit says.

Helen McClain and Mitchell said the suit, which was filed July 26 in Wayne County Circuit Court in Detroit, was necessary because jail officials won't give them information about Maurice McClain's death.

"I asked for any evidence, any pictures -- anything that they can show me. I haven't been called back," McClain said.

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans said Tuesday that McClain had been told that her son's death was under investigation. He could not say when the investigation would be concluded because the Detroit Police Department had not finished its inquiry.

Detroit police are involved because the death occurred in the city.

"She suffered a tragedy, and I understand that," Evans said.

Evans said that an evaluation of Maurice McClain based on his age, the crime and his history indicated that he should have been in an adult facility.

According to Maurice McClain's juvenile records, he had been placed in at least three programs after he was found guilty in 2005 of helping two other men snatch a woman's purse. In each of the facilities, he got into trouble.

After he was charged with escaping from Star Commonwealth in Albion while he was on a home visit in Detroit, a judge chose to send him to adult jail rather than to a boot camp.

Contact **CECIL ANGEL** at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com. Staff writer Jack Kresnak contributed to this report.

Copyright © 2006 Detroit Free Press Inc.



Niles Daily Star

ONLINE EDITION

Print Page

Jelinek, Nitz herald new Michigan Works location

By MICHAEL C. GUILMETTE JR. / Niles Daily Star
Wednesday, August 2, 2006 10:49 AM EDT

BUCHANAN - Although temperatures hovered in the 90s Tuesday evening, area dignitaries and the public came out to officially open south Berrien County's newest employment services office.

Michigan Works' Buchanan office, formerly located in Niles, was opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on its front steps.

Among those taking part in the event were Todd Gustafson, executive director of Michigan Works, Mike Klarich, executive director of the Buchanan Chamber of Commerce, Jeanette Leahey, Berrien County commissioner and State Representative Neal Nitz, R-Baroda.

"This area has a very, very strong workforce, and strong employers as well," Klarich said, adding that Michigan Works' role is to get the two together.

Leahey echoed these words, adding she was pleased that Michigan Works has a presence in the Niles-Buchanan area.

"I believe services will be enhanced," she said.

Nitz also spoke kindly of the new office during his stop in Buchanan.

"It is a privilege to be back in Buchanan," he said of his visit. "Opening this office brings hope to the people of Buchanan."

Nitz said he has assisted Michigan Works in the past in setting up systems to allow jobseekers to search for jobs in the service centers.

"This was a great opportunity to help jobseekers to search for jobs," he said.

Although not part of the ribbon cutting, State Senator Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks, also spoke well of the new office.

"The honor goes to this office," Jelinek said. "I'm glad to see an office in Buchanan to serve Niles and Buchanan."

Jelinek has been at the forefront of another effort to aid Michigan Works - an effort to gain state recognition for the statewide service.

Gustafson, who oversees the Berrien, Cass and Van Buren offices, explained that Michigan Works, as it is presently constituted, is a loose association of 25 workforce development boards located across the state.

The makeup of these boards is largely determined by local governments, Gustafson said, and the Department of Labor and Economic Growth sets policy and provides funding.

Under Senate Bill 1288, the Michigan Works One-Stop Service Center System Act, Michigan Works was recognized by the state as the official employment service in the state of Michigan.

The bill, co-sponsored by Jelinek and 12 other senators, recently passed the Senate 38-0 and is now awaiting action by the House.

"We want to recognize the situation that already exists," Jelinek said. "We don't want to re-invent the wheel."

Both Jelinek and Gustafson said that the legislation would not change the day-to-day operation of Michigan Works. However, Jelinek said codifying Michigan Works into law will remove the need for the state to develop a separate bureaucracy for employment services.



Cutting the ribbon Tuesday evening at the new Michigan Works office in Buchanan were (front row, from left) Berrien County commissioner and Michigan Works board member Jeanette Leahey, Rep. Neal Nitz, R-Baroda, board member Margie Hojara-Hadsell, Michigan Works executive director Todd Gustafson, (back row, from left) board member Bob Wagel, Bob Cochrane, Dr. Fred Mathews and Buchanan Chamber of Commerce Director Michelle Klarich.

Michigan Report

August 1, 2006

DISABLED, ELDERLY ADVOCATES SAY BUDGET DAMAGING TO GOALS

Despite a small increase in the 2006-07 Department of Community Health budget for the care of the disabled and elderly, advocates for those groups say the process took a turn away from the long-term care goals of the federal government and a majority of other states.

On the positive side, long-term home health care workers saw a long-overdue increase in the base rate, from a \$5.15 an hour minimum to \$7 an hour, and families will get a modest \$10 a week increase in personal care reimbursement from Medicaid, representatives from The Michigan Olmstead Coalition said on Tuesday of the latest budget which was approved last week.

Another positive in the budget was that the state will now require more detailed information about what happens to nursing home complaints, said Sarah Slocum, state long-term care ombudsman for DCH's Office of Services to the Aging.

"We want to quantify the problem and know how big it is and how to fix it," she said.

She also applauded provisions in the budget that earmark excess money, should there be any, to go to wages of nursing home employees and community mental health workers.

But with that progress came a major setback, said RoAnne Chaney, health policy director at the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition.

She said lawmakers went against federal policy and recommendations of a state taskforce when it effectively capped Medicaid funds available for families who choose in-home care at \$100 million, while leaving nearly \$1.6 billion for those who choose institutional care such as nursing homes.

That cap will force many families to choose the more expensive institutional route if money for in-home care isn't available, which is contrary to the goal of helping the disabled and elderly integrate into their communities, said Mark Cody, legal director for Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services.

He said the in-home care program is "severely underfunded," down by about \$40 million over recent years.

Additionally, while workers who care for the disabled and elderly in their homes will get a pay raise, Michigan's minimum hourly rate is still below the national average of \$8 an hour.

Added to the low wages is the fact that about 40 percent of people in that field have no access to health care coverage and the turnover rate equals about 70 percent annually, which costs the state an extra \$120 million a year in rehiring and training costs, the group said.

Bill Knox from the AARP said reducing options for long-term care only maintains the institutional bias state lawmakers have held for more than 40 years.

“The system should be customer-friendly and customer driven, not one that caters to institutions,” he said.

Political Game Will Hurt Mental Care

August 2, 2006

A complicated game of chicken is under way with Wayne County mental health care services. People who need help will suffer unless the political brinksmanship ends.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is awaiting a budget bill that will impose a \$3.5-million monthly penalty starting Dec. 1 until the county forms an independent mental health authority. Granholm agreed to that provision as part of the overall budget compromise with the Legislature and can't back out now.

The bill does allow the county to recoup the money if an authority is set up by Sept. 30, 2007. But it's also entirely possible that state lawmakers will force an authority on the county in December -- and dare Granholm to repeat the veto she exercised when they did the same thing two years ago.

Granholm is walking a political tightrope, because County Executive Robert Ficano opposes an authority, while Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick favors one. The Wayne County Commission also is studying a proposal to enact an authority on its own. The commission probably has the votes, but perhaps not enough of a majority to override a Ficano veto.

One way or another, Wayne County's current convoluted structure for mental health services -- starting with an agency board appointed half by the mayor and half by the county executive -- has to go. It creates a tug-of-war over control, jobs and contracts. Ficano has made improvements, but with a \$530-million budget, the system has many powerful competing interests, and all they do is point fingers at one another. Heading the agency has become a revolving-door job; the position is currently vacant.

Either the commission can go ahead and create an authority, forcing the issue sooner rather than later, or Granholm can lock everyone in a room and knock heads. Lawmakers also have a role, because they need to change how the board is appointed. As hard as it is in an election year, someone has to step up and stop this race over a cliff -- where the \$3.5-million-a-month damage will surely fall on the county residents least able to defend themselves.

Copyright © 2006 Detroit Free Press Inc.

